

Facade by ErgophobLeah

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Summary:

“Hello...?” Steve called, his tone hesitant and unsure, but concerned nonetheless.

No response.

Steve approached further, careful, craning his head to navigate the alley, a few stray strands of coffee-colored hair draping over his forehead, his wide eyes slowly adjusting to the dark. He heard the groaning again, and then—

“H-Help... Please...”

Steve didn’t need to be told twice.

1. Dark

Author's Note:

Please heed the tags before reading this story! This chapter, of all the chapters, will be the worst of the lot, so I'm just going to put that out there now. So if you're sensitive to what has been depicted in the tags, then please reconsider reading.

Apologies for any grammatical errors and whatnot.

Enjoy!

Steve Harrington's steps were short and frisky, the frosty breeze of the January night sweeping through his coiffed hair as he slumped his stiff shoulders further, berating himself for not having worn a warmer coat.

He settled for clenching his fists in the pockets of his Member's Only jacket, repeating the action every few seconds as a meagre attempt to heat himself up.

He fought against his chattering teeth, straining his jaw as he kept his head hung low, cheeks flushed brightly due to how cold it was, swiping his tongue over his dry lips. His eyes were locked on the path ahead of him.

What the Hell was he doing?

It was late at night in the quiet and dejected town that Steve mindlessly decided to drive to, a town he didn't even know the name of that was even further into the 'nowhere' of Indiana.

It was a damned bitter night, too. Steve sighed to himself, huffing a short gust of air as he shuffled passed closed stores, though a minor few were still open, with flickering signs and dim lighting, desperate for business.

The street Steve was currently walking along was weakly lit as well, and there was practically no one around, which was hardly a

surprise. Most would be sleeping at such a ridiculous time, and Steve was aware he should be, too.

The teen hardly cared, however, he had just wanted to get out of his house. Steve couldn't stop himself from cringing when he thought about the reason he was walking around so numbly on such a bitter night, in some random-ass town, a decent few miles from Hawkins. His parents weren't home, as usual, and he had been left alone to his own devices yet again.

Steve had driven to the centre of the town before deciding to park his car in an empty lot, though he ensured to park it out of sight, hiding it in the darkness as best he could. He adored his car and it was insanely expensive, and this place instantly gave Steve a bad impression upon arriving. He didn't want to take any chances.

By this point, Steve has been walking around aimlessly for about ten minutes or so, going to God only knows where. He just didn't want to spend a moment longer alone in his house, his '*home*'.

The brunette wanted some time to breathe, to escape his troubles. Hawkins wasn't granting him even a semblance of peace; it was so small, so compact and full to the brim of far too many memories, both good and bad.

They all hurt the same.

This was why Steve travelled so far away from home. He had no intention of staying in this shabby town for the night, but an hour or so to simply *think* would be enough to tire him out before he would return home and head to bed for much required sleep.

Though, for now, Steve was simply hoping to find a diner of some sort to mope in; those small, distasteful ones that stay open essentially all the time. There was no way he was going to freeze his ass off outside. However, so far, Steve's search wasn't turning out quite as he had planned.

The town wasn't nearly as nice as Hawkins, which said a lot, as Hawkins wasn't exactly remarkable nor beautiful.

Not to be mistaken, Hawkins is a sweet, cosy town; simple and carefree. Well, that was the impression it gave off. But unfortunately, Steve was apart of the very small number of people that were aware of the horrors that lie within its vicinity.

Even then, despite the knowledge, Steve found himself to be quite unsettled in this town, much more than he would be typically in Hawkins. It was unwelcoming, lonely, dull.

Even at this hour, Hawkins was still quite lively. There were plenty of lights to grant the town life, and even some people would be strolling carelessly about.

But this town? Steve could only describe it as wrong. There was a low-lying layer of corruption the place held, but it wasn't akin to the kind that the Upside Down had. Steve didn't like it regardless.

It was tolerable, for now, at least. Steve found a relaxing serenity wash over him as he continued his walk, despite the raw and piercing cold and how ridiculously late it was. Not to mention the odd and almost unnerving feeling that ran through him upon being in an unfamiliar place.

Steve mentally hit himself for acting so paranoid, but there was something in the far corners of his mind that was trying to warn him about where he was. Perhaps staying for over an hour wasn't the best of ideas.

Being left by himself was nothing new to Steve, but that didn't make it any more bearable. If anything, the more his parents left him alone in such a large house, the worse Steve felt about it.

Steve swiftly brushed those thoughts aside with a shake of his head and muttered brief gibberish, refusing to let his fears grasp hold of him once more, after driving out here to strictly avoid such feelings.

Steve didn't want to believe he was such a mess.

It had been fine before. Steve once had so many friends, people who he could call over at any time and hang with. Steve's parents leaving him alone all the time had once been a blessing to the reckless and

popular *King Steve*.

For the past year, however, Steve's parents being away all the time allowed Steve to enjoy being around someone who wasn't an idiot who craved chaos and alcohol, someone who was caring and kind, who didn't want to spend time with the popular *King Steve*, but rather, *Steve*.

Just Steve.

Steve once had Nancy.

Despite it being almost two months since their break-up, Steve would be lying if he said he didn't miss her terribly. He still found himself longing for her to be beside him in his bed, reading a book or spouting about her school work and studies, usually about things Steve wouldn't have been particularly interested in, but was anyway because it was Nancy that was talking about it.

His chest clenched uncomfortably whenever he found himself thinking back on the memories, when he thought about seeing her with Jonathan Byers every day, and not him.

For over a year Steve and Nancy had been happily together, only for the relationship they shared to be stamped and disapproved as *bullshit*, and then formally signed off by Nancy Wheeler herself.

Steve swallowed harshly, eyes glazed over like glass as he walked, his thoughts beginning to slowly consume him, knowing that they probably won't ever stop bothering him, no matter how far away he drove.

Despite it all, Steve was reluctantly willing to accept that Nancy simply didn't love him. He didn't blame her for falling out of love with him—not that she ever did love him.

They were still friends, of course, and honestly, Steve wasn't ready to lose her entirely, so he happily took the mantle. He had even begun to form a sort of friendship with Jonathan, which he never really expected to happen, especially when one considered that he was Nancy's current boyfriend.

Their companionship was weak and still in the process of growing, but the small, brief smiles they exchanged and the glances they shared were becoming less awkward and more frequent as of late.

Then, little conversations began to form and laughter was soon followed.

Steve truly found it difficult to dislike the ever-timid Jonathan, he was a good guy, despite their past feud. It was over now. Steve could move on from Nancy, could accept her and Jonathan as his friends.

His only decent friends, if he was going to be honest with himself.

Steve flinched and stopped dead in his tracks, suddenly dragged out of the steep depth of his thoughts by the troubling sound of deep groaning coming from the dimmed alleyway he was just passing. It was between an old bar and a closed store that was cheap and small.

Shivering slightly as a brief wind whipped passed him once more, Steve squinted his big, brown eyes to peer searchingly down the narrow alley, trying to visualise whoever it was that was down there and if they were okay, using the little light he had from the street lamps in the area. They weren't too helpful, as the lane was poorly lit, leaving the curious teen with no success.

Steve inhaled deeply, an observant expression settling itself upon his features.

The alleyway appeared quite ominous, it was somewhat damp and littered with all kinds of garbage, mainly cigarette buds and empty beer bottles that laid in abundance across the ground.

He could barely make out a few trash cans lining against the chipped brick walls, their lids resting upon heaps of rubbish; they clearly have not been emptied in quite some time. The whole area didn't smell particularly welcoming nor pleasant, either.

Steve slowly perked a brow and pursed his lips, ready to blow it all off as nothing and continue his walk before he heard the low groan yet again, much louder this time. Steve instantly knew it belonged to a man, presumably older than him due to how raspy and aged it

sounded, perhaps out of his mind on booze if the fact he was beside a bar was any indication.

Steve knew he was probably being ridiculous, but his mind was suddenly blaring alarms at him, the disturbing image of an open, holed face riddled with uneven, sharp teeth and oozing saliva beginning to invade his mind.

Steve found himself trying to reach for his nailed-bat, before he blinked a few times in confusion, soon realizing it was left in the trunk of his car.

Steve digested his nerves, stepping attentively into the darkened alley, hands no longer pushed deep into his pockets but now clenched at his side, trembling slightly, his knuckles white both from the cold and the tightness of his grip.

Steve had a questioning look upon his features, regardless of his attempt to appear confident.

“Hello...?” Steve called, his tone hesitant and unsure, but concerned nonetheless.

No response.

Steve approached further, careful, craning his head to navigate the alley, a few stray strands of coffee-colored hair draping over his forehead, his wide eyes slowly adjusting to the dark. He heard the groaning again, and then—

“H-Help... Please...”

Steve didn’t need to be told twice.

The brunette immediately darted forward, trying to locate the source of the frayed voice. His bewildered eyes soon landed themselves upon a dark figure laying against the wall further down the alley.

Steve felt his heartbeat increase in speed, wasting no time in making his way to the person’s side, brows knotted in concern as he knelt beside the man.

Steve wasn't sure why, but he expected to see blood, to see a person who had been mangled and torn by a demodog— a *demogorgan*. To see the monstrous creature itself suddenly appear and lunge for him.

No such thing happened.

“Are you okay? Are—Are you hurt?” Steve eyed the man over, stuttering and stumbling over his rushed words, breathing quite heavily, body heating up from the sudden adrenaline as he tried to assess the sprawled man for any wounds or injuries.

Instead, all Steve found was a maliciously pleased smile upon the stranger's face, a disturbing expression he could scarcely see in the shadows, and it was then that Steve knew he had made a horrible mistake coming to this foreign town.

Before Steve could even think to react, he found himself being slammed to the ground in a mere second. He yelped as he was aggressively propelled, though it was cut short as a distressed grunt passed his lips upon his head being smacked so barbarically against the icy, solid ground.

It all occurred far too quickly for Steve to even begin to comprehend what was happening, but the brawny man was now directly above him, straddling the dazed boy's hips with ease as he pinned Steve's wrists above his head using a singular hand, his strength and force was brutal and merciless.

Steve was about to fight back as his mind began to finally piece itself back together, use his leg strength to push the man off him and kick the living shit out of this asshole who thought he could try attack him like this, but Steve soon found something cold and sharp pressing against his pulsing throat.

His breath hitched as he promptly stopped his struggling.

“If you try *anything* – scream, fight --*anything*. And you're *dead*. Got it, kid?”

Steve surprised himself with a whimper, shivering, no longer due to the cold weather. His breath came out shaky as he observed the man

above him, swallowing hard.

The man's voice was deep and gravelly as he spoke lowly to him, Steve felt sick upon hearing the restricted excitement that lingered in his tone.

He couldn't make out much, except that the man was wearing rugged, dark and dirty clothes. His hair was greasy, slick and long; some strands draped carelessly over his forehead while the rest was tucked behind his ears. A strong smell of alcohol emitted from him, so intense that it made Steve's stomach twist and churn, his face and nose now scrunching in disgust.

It took a moment for Steve to finally respond.

"H-Hey, look—if you want my money—j-just—my wallet's in my pocket—just—calm down, man-..." Steve's voice was hoarse and quiet as he stammered, clearly terrified, trying desperately not to upset the man, knowing he was asking for a death wish if he tried to do anything.

He just wanted to escape this with his life, now. After fighting a demogorgan and demodogs, having helped in closing the gate to the horrific world of the Upside Down-- Steve wasn't keen about losing his life to a drunken maniac.

The man laughed wickedly, lips curling in a cruel manner, amused. Steve couldn't see the man's eager eyes drag down his restrained body, absorbing the lean muscles that tensed against his clothing. The man's grip on his wrists tightened as he locked his eyes upon Steve's face, his starved gaze roving over his high cheekbones and soft lips, before peering into his dark, doe eyes that were full of fear.

Steve stared back, dizzy, stiffening further.

"Oh... you are a *pretty one*."

Steve's mind froze. He was certain the man could feel his pulse quicken rapidly, his face paling as the man used his hand that was holding the blade to trail down Steve's clothed chest, his intent now evident to Steve, who immediately began to panic.

No. No, this—This couldn't be right. Steve wasn't—How could this guy think of trying such a thing with him?

Steve, out of sheer astonishment alone, let out a small, hysterical laugh, but it was hardly related to mirth or joy. Steve gawked up at the man, as though he had two heads, eyes bulged in confusion.

“Y-You? What the *fuck*, man--?!” Steve's shock subsided into anger, but the stranger was quick to respond by roughly grasping Steve's hair from the back, smashing his head upon the ground once more. Steve saw stars, bright white dots piercing his gaze as he clasped his eyes shut, tears welling from the pain.

Steve released a fleeting gasp, his eyes shooting open as he felt the man ferociously latch his mouth upon the jugular of his neck, grossly sucking and gnawing, Steve having not even sensed him lean down.

Steve despairingly attempted to once more remove his bruising wrists from the man's remorselessly powerful grip, but Steve was but a mere lanky teenager to this burly grown man. Steve cried out against his better judgement, buckling his hips upwards repeatedly to perhaps shove the man off him.

The man growled savagely in Steve's ear, his breath searing and fowl to smell as he gave Steve's lobe a hasty bite. He pressed his weight harder against Steve, holding the knife in the teen's view to try to subdue him as he proceeded to fiercely lap his tongue and graze his teeth against Steve's jaw.

Steve reacted to the actions as though the man's mouth was fire, heaving loudly, violently twisting his face away, narrowly avoiding the man's endeavour to settle his lips on Steve's.

“Please—*no*—Look, Jesus, *I'm fucking rich*—I'll give you anything—” Steve shrieked and choked on a sob when the man used the metal handle of the knife to jab his side forcefully, winding Steve as he unleashed an animalistic snarl.

“I told you to *shut the fuck up*.”

The man, no longer willing to endure Steve's struggles and protests,

refused to hold back.

He landed a firm punch into Steve's face; once, twice, three times, before kneeing him hard in the stomach again and again. Steve wheezed, arching his body up off the ground, though barely due to the man sitting on him, unable to cry out as the bastard had his way with him, having rendered Steve unable to think properly.

Steve felt blood trickle from his mouth, shuddering as the icy air invaded his freshly created cuts. His scuffling faltered.

The man's calloused and rough hands trailed down Steve's sides whilst Steve tried to regain himself, breathing intensely as he heard the man swiftly unbuckle his belt and undo the button and zip of his jeans.

Steve didn't know what to do, Steve *couldn't* do anything. His head was spinning, heart racing as unrelenting fear and terror filled his mind, a part of him secretly wishing it had been a demogorgan waiting for him down this alley. He wanted to scream for help, to fight back again, to go back to his empty house and never leave again.

This can't happen to him.

The man began to hastily take off his belt, showing no signs of stopping, no sympathy nor regret, anxious to do what he pleased to the helpless and weakened boy below him, that disgusting smile soon finding itself back upon his face, convinced he had won.

Steve suddenly felt the weight of the man disappear.

Steve didn't even care about why or how the man had been thrown off him in that moment as he hastily scrambled back against the wall behind him, disregarding his injuries although he was still reeling from the man's sadistic attacks, his face bloodied and red from the punches, his torso and stomach more than likely battered and bruised.

He heaved, shaking frantically, curling in on himself, hiding his battered face behind his shaking arms as he finally brought himself to

look at where the man had landed upon being shoved off him, Steve now able to see who had come to his rescue.

It may have been dark and Steve may have been beaten to a pulp, but Steve knew that tall and muscular figure from anywhere. The curly, blonde hair still very visible in the dark.

Billy Hargrove.

Of all people to save Steve, *Billy fucking Hargrove*—What the Hell was he doing here? Why was he here--?

Steve's mind was quick to be drawn away from his hyperactive thoughts, the teen staring at the display before him; astounded, terror-stricken. His eyes tremored as he gaped, brows knotted, hands glued to the sides of his head.

Billy, with his back turned to Steve, was practically *dismantling* the man, who had just near demolished Steve, with feral and bestial kicks. His assaulter was now cowering on the ground, crying out in agony as Billy completely lost his shit and wreaked Hell upon him, relentlessly landing kick after kick after kick, most of which landed on the man's stomach, some against his guarded face.

Despite that this man had tricked Steve into believing he had needed his help only to lure him into the alley, who had then viciously assaulted Steve and proceeded to try to force him into a sexual scenario with him, Steve *still* felt a small tinge of sympathy for him, if not fear for how utterly fucked he was.

That's how brutal and bloodthirsty Billy's hits were.

Even Steve closed in on himself further with downright fear, pressing his legs closer to his weakened body, flinching and clasp his eyes shut with each hit, only to open them again to watch, a lump caught in his throat, gaping, as Billy absolutely desecrated the man, Billy who was now kneeling down to punch him harshly.

"Fucking—Fuck—"

Steve shivered as Billy's growls and yelling reached his ears, unable to tear his terrified gaze away from the violent sight before him, the

crimson blood that hurtled through the air after each sickening smack, the way Billy just planted the man into the frigid, stone ground.

“You fucking—Don’t you fucking touch him—”

It was then Steve knew that Billy was going to kill this man.

Steve slowly shifted, wincing in pain, as he let out a struggled but rather loud sob, a sorry-ass attempt to speak, but he was just too damn afraid and worn and weak to tell Billy to stop, to not *murder* the man.

Much to Steve’s surprise, the frail sound he had made seemed to catch Billy’s attention, the muscular male suddenly stopping his attacks, panting heavily, exposed chest glistening with sweat and blood as it rose and fell with each heave of breath, his unruly hair slick and damp.

Billy looked nothing short of an absolute psychopath with the way his wild blue eyes glared death at the now unconscious man, face speckled with the man’s blood, teeth gritted with a sneer. Billy was quaking with intense fury, his fists remaining clenched at his side, bloodied and purple.

He shakily turned around, piercing eyes quickly landing on Steve’s battered figure, of whom sank a little lower, dread and fright evident in his dark eyes as he stared feebly at Billy, cheeks stained with warm tears that Steve hadn’t even noticed had fallen, the brunette on the precipice of collapsing.

Steve felt so powerless.

Steve couldn’t help but feel startled by the unexpected change on Billy’s face, the anger—the *rage*—now abruptly replaced with nothing short of pure devastation, saddened blue eyes filled with regret and sorrow.

Steve stared, baffled, as Billy sprinted to him in a flash, kneeling before him, never removing his distressed gaze from Steve, who absent-mindedly hid himself further, closing his eyes tightly.

Who could blame him?

This was Billy Hargrove. The same Billy Hargrove who beat him up at the Byers' home, who was just about to hurt an innocent kid beforehand. Billy Hargrove who mocked and chastised him in school, expressing no remorse nor sympathy in his actions.

Billy Hargrove, who was just on the verge of murdering a man with his fists alone, before Steve's very eyes.

Billy Hargrove, who was now slowly and tenderly resting a bloodied and bruised hand upon his trembling knee. Steve couldn't help but notice how he seemed to be reaching for his face before deciding to settle it there.

Billy offered a look so painfully soft and pitiful that Steve was convinced he was dreaming all this right now, how mind-blowing it was that it took Billy Hargrove showing a sliver of care and kindness for him to think as such.

"Harrington—Steve—C-Christ..."

Steve watched, overwhelmed, as Billy quivered before him, completely forgetting for the briefest of moments that he had just been sexually assaulted by another man. He was astonished that Billy was displaying such raw emotion right in-front of him, as though he actually gave a damn about Steve—

Why did Billy save him?

Steve would have said that he didn't care that he felt nothing bad for believing that Billy was incapable of doing such a thing; to help another person in need.

But now? After it happened, after not only having been rescued from an unbearably traumatic situation, but having been able to escape with his life?

Steve owed more than his life to Billy.

And right now, Steve had never been so ecstatic to see another living person, no matter who they were, even if they once tried to beat him

to a pulp. Billy Hargrove; who apparently wasn't an A-grade asshole.

Steve really must have had one too many hits to the head.

Billy reached out for Steve once more, this time with a clearer intent, moving close to wrap his tense arms around the slimmer male, steady in his actions, seeming to test how much Steve could move without causing too much pain.

Steve grimaced, sniffing with a slight whimper as he allowed Billy to move him, desperately clinging to the man now, as though he were a life-line, not questioning any further about why Billy Hargrove had saved his ass and was now helping him up.

“W-Wait--*Ah*—It hurts—*B-Billy*—” Steve hissed and bit his tongue. He could taste the copper of his blood.

“I have you, it's alright—I'll take you to the hospital. You'll be alright —”

Even as Steve groaned in pain due to moving, he couldn't help but be in awe as he allowed Billy to lift him up, slowly, the other teen mindful of his injuries as he set one hand firmly upon Steve's hip, the other leisurely moving one of Steve's arms around his shoulder so that he could better hold him up.

Despite Billy's strength, Steve still limped as they walked, unrushed, out of the dark alley, unable to do nothing but feebly lean most of his weight onto the blonde helping him, his body felt frail and fragile.

Steve certainly made a habit of getting his ass handed to him a lot.

Billy had a look of determination upon his face, the male still breathing quite heavily from the fight. If one could even call it a fight.

That man didn't stand a chance against Billy Hargrove.

The man, who was now long forgotten as he remained limp upon the ground, perhaps even dead for all Steve knew.

The only concern for the two now was to get to a damn hospital.

2. Gleaming

Notes for the Chapter:

Alright. It's only up-hill from here, bois. This chapter was stupidly difficult to write, but also really fun?

I can't describe how much I love writing these two. Agh.

Thank you so much to everyone who commented on the last chapter - your words are my fuel.

Oh, and side not, I'm @Ergophob-Leah on Tumblr if anyone wants to pop over and interact.

Apologies again for any grammatical errors and whatnot.

Enjoy!

Steve's gaze was blank as he stared dryly at the pale, glossy floor of the hospital room. The building was loud; the low, monotonous murmurs of doctors and nurses conversing with patients throughout the hallways all collected together into one incoherent sound; phones were ringing far too loudly whilst hospital beds were pushed around like shopping carts.

The brunette was sat upon a firm bed, of which was much too uncomfortable and hard to relax upon, and its abrasive and grainy sheets of paper that spread across it certainly didn't help. Steve grasped the paper with both hands, negligent in his actions as he crumpled it into his fists, far too occupied with the flurry of thoughts bolting about in his mind.

Too many questions, too many whys. The night's events kept repeating over and over in his head, like a broken record player.

He felt his headache grow increasingly worse.

A short female nurse, much older than him, with light brown and long straight hair was currently seeing to his wounds, mainly his

face, which was littered with dark bruises and uneven cuts. Her green eyes were wide and sympathetic, her pink lips drawn back into a disapproving frown. She hummed, shaking her head.

“You teenage boys, always getting into all kinds of trouble. I hope your mother knows what you’ve been up to—If you were my boy...” Her voice trailed off at that comment as she tutted, quickly shuffling away to probably get some band-aids and disinfected wipes, and hopefully some damned painkillers.

Steve weakly opened his mouth to reply, but soon clamped it shut once more, trying his utmost best not to retort back with a smart comment against her words, recalling that both he and Billy decided that their story was that they both just got into a mindless scrap with two other guys.

Steve was more than happy to lie about what had happened, if anyone knew that he had almost been—

Steve winced at the thought and swiftly pushed it aside, bringing a contused hand up to pinch the bridge of his swollen nose, eyes closing tightly as everything that happened practically smacked him in the face, his stomach clenching with a sickening feeling.

Billy probably didn’t even know what was really happening in that alley.

“No, no, don’t do that—!” The woman swatted his hand away gently, biting her cheek briefly as she brought a wipe up to delicately clean his face. Steve endured the treatment, forcing his lips into a thin line as he battled against a sigh, wanting nothing more than to just go home.

To forget this night ever happened.

Steve allowed the nurse to do her work while he desperately tried to ignore the very intimidating presence in the room, his eyes once again locking upon the floor.

Steve was unnerved by how unnaturally quiet Billy was right now. Even during the car ride to the hospital, which was a fair few miles

from the town Steve had driven to, Billy had barely spoke, he merely clarified what they should tell any of the nurses or doctors they interacted with, for both their sakes.

Billy had beaten a man half to death—if he wasn't already dead, and that wasn't going to sit well with anyone here. Billy would get into some serious trouble, and Steve would be lying if he said that he wanted that; Billy saved his ass, after all. He owed at least this to Billy.

Steve fidgeted with the coarse paper in his throbbing hands, forcing himself not to bite his bloodied and bruised lips as he tried to ignore Billy's burning stare, attempting to appear indifferent to the situation.

The muscular teen had just finished wiping himself clean of any blood with a wet cloth offered to him by the nurse, the bloodied cloth of which he was now holding in one hand carelessly, clearly not giving two shits about the odd looks people were giving him.

Steve couldn't help but recall how frenzied Billy had become when he bludgeoned that man into the dirt with his kicks and punches, how he had been so *furious*—

“You fucking—Don't you fucking touch him—”

Those words were ringing in Steve's head, almost to the point where it made him nauseous. Billy had sounded as though he had just snapped; infuriated – had long travelled beyond his boiling point.

For Steve?

Even after that, when Billy had helped him so *gently* into his Camaro; his sharp eyes were still alight with an intense and raging fire, bright and overwhelming; daring anyone to try put out his flame.

Steve had risked multiple momentary glances towards Billy as he drove, silent, noting the strength of his grip upon the steering wheel, how it caused his reddened knuckles to whiten. His stare on the road was fervent, so powerful to Steve that he briefly believed that it would kill him had Billy chose to look at him then.

Steve had honestly been afraid as he sat like a spooked animal in the

passenger seat of Billy's car, trying desperately not to shake as he closed in on himself, making no effort whatsoever to speak. Steve didn't even try to relax throughout their journey, knowing it was a fruitless endeavour.

"There... all cleaned and patched up." The nurse interrupted his thoughts, finishing the statement with a pop of her lips as she moved to put the band aids and wipes away. Steve steadily lifted a hand and lightly smoothed it over his face, noting the few band-aids now decorating his damaged skin. He was fortunate enough to not need stitches.

"Thank you..." He muttered softly, lowering his head as he slid off the bed, mindful of his pained stomach, his cheeks blazing with nothing else that he could describe other than shame.

Steve sedately directed his eyes to Billy, who was peering at him with a penetrative look, his eyes appearing both enraged and tender at the same time. Steve quickly looked away, too damn tired to feel any more shaken up than he has been.

Both Billy and Steve left the hospital roughly fifteen minutes later, Steve appearing no less exhausted and weak, while Billy was remarkably calm, though Steve believed his eyes told another story.

The nurse had been bombarding the two with questions regarding their 'fight' and the other two non-existent males involved. They both just brushed her questions off in a lazy-manner, attempting to act indifferent to the situation, soon boring the nurse before she reluctantly let them go, but not before she warned them to not get into any more trouble and to head straight home.

Billy offered her the reassuring, feigned smile that Steve was just too drained to provide.

The two teens made their way to Billy's car, and Steve suddenly halted to a stop and blankly stared at Billy as the blonde opened the door for him first, waiting patiently.

When Steve didn't make a move to get in, Billy inhaled and rolled his eyes, pursing his lips slightly as he secured his grip on the Camaro's door.

"Are you gonna get in or what, Harrington?" Billy exasperated, clearly worn out himself, but soon regretted the sharpness of his words as Steve made no reaction nor sign to speak and climbed into the car, unhurried.

Billy grinded his teeth slightly, expression thoughtful as he stared off towards the hospital briefly, before slamming the car door shut and strutting around to hop into the driver's seat. He didn't take his time in starting up the car's engine and soon enough, they were speeding away.

Steve granted his eyes a moment to watch the building disappear in the wing mirror before he leisurely closed them, exhaling a breath of air. His body practically went limp as he lay his head against the window, his limbs instinctively cramming in on himself.

Steve would have curled into a ball if it wasn't such a disrespectful gesture to Billy's property, or if it didn't mean he'd get his ass kicked again for doing it.

"You're damned lucky she didn't notice. You know that, right?"

Steve's eyes opened and locked onto Billy as he spoke abruptly, confusion evident on his features as his brows furrowed. He forced himself to sit up slightly, wincing at the sharp pain in his abdomen as he eyed Billy warily.

"What do you mean?" He questioned tiredly, eyes narrowed as he stared out the window once more, a knotted sensation of pure dread settling itself within his stomach as he tried his very best to seem unconcerned about it all.

It didn't help that Billy fell silent for an almost ridiculous amount of

time, and Steve was ready to drop the conversation there before Billy spoke up once more, and it scared Steve at how particular he was in saying his words, as though he was threading on thin ice.

“Your jaw—your neck, Harrington.” Billy said carefully, bordering on emphasising each syllable of those words, his gaze not once deterring from the road ahead of him, one hand gripping the steering wheel tightly while the other stretched over his leg.

Steve knew there was nothing offensive in what Billy just said, and yet he felt insulted; as though someone had just come up to him and spat in his face. His face darkened considerably as he self-consciously covered his neck with his bruised hand, before reaching up to rub his jaw.

Billy knew.

His jaw, his neck; Steve flinched as he recalled the man’s mouth upon him, his teeth digging into his flesh, his lips like a suction. Steve couldn’t help the tears that began to brim in his eyes as he stifled his trauma, trying desperately to avoid Billy noticing, curling into the tiny corner of his seat while covering his face shamefully, heaving a long and drawn sigh.

Steve managed not to cry or even let his tears fall, despite his trembling and burning cheeks. He felt as though he was being consumed with shame and disgust, and again, the horrible scene of that bastard trying to take him was replaying over and over in his mind.

He shouldn’t have left his house, he shouldn’t have travelled so far away and he shouldn’t have left so late at night. Why was he so fucking stupid? Trying to escape trouble only to be pulled into more—way to go, Harrington. *King Steve*, what a joke.

He was such a damned disgrace. Only something like this would happen to him.

The brunette hadn’t even noticed that Billy had pulled the car over until he shut the engine off. Steve startled slightly and shot his watery gaze to Billy, who was staring at him intensely, that very

same fire - wild and feral - was alight in his eyes once more.

“Whatever the Hell you’re thinking in that pretty little head of yours —just-- I want you to stop. Now.” Steve’s mouth fell open a little as Billy’s fixed-gaze became more pointed and demanding, the blonde’s tone was painfully serious.

“This wasn’t your fault, Steve.”

Steve.

Billy never referred to him as Steve. It was always Harrington or some nickname that the blonde had conjured up to mock him. Billy had called him Steve in the alley; his voice was shaken and so overwhelmingly emotional, but Steve had been too afraid to care at the time.

Then, without thinking, he blurted, “Why did you help me?”

Steve would have been typically embarrassed by the way his voice broke and how his breath hitched as he spoke, but there was clearly a pattern in how much Steve gave a damn about certain things tonight.

His eyes were quivering as he and Billy stared each other dead on; Steve, nervous and unsure, Billy, piercing and deadpan.

When Billy didn’t answer, Steve continued, a little more confident and certain of what he wanted to ask. “How—Why were you there? I drove so far from Hawkins, so far from everyone. You were—How--Right when I needed—when I was—”

Steve proceeded to butcher the question, riling himself up the more he spoke. His breathing became more laboured and he averted his eyes from Billy’s, wrapping his arms around his middle. He felt as though he was going to throw up.

Steve jerked when he felt a gentle hand settle itself upon his shoulder and the distressed teen soon brought his eyes back to Billy, who was trying so hard not to lose himself in his own emotions, clearly struggling to speak.

“We—We’re not doing this tonight.” Billy said slowly, and Steve

couldn't help the odd sense of relief that washed over him. It was a promise, of sorts, that for the rest of tonight, Steve was just going to be left alone. That nothing else bad was going to happen.

"Just... I'm going to get you home, you're not in a state to be talking about much of anything right now, Bambi."

Steve suddenly felt something warm begin to form in the pit of his stomach at the use of the stupidly adorable nickname, not quite feeling up to defending his masculinity as he sniffled freely. He felt as though a weight had been removed from his shoulders. He knew now Billy wasn't going to shame him for what happened, no matter how shit Steve felt about it all.

They both took a moment of silence, before Billy released a barely audible sigh and removed his hand from Steve's shoulder. He started up the car and drove off once more, heading towards Hawkins yet again.

Steve found himself feeling exceptionally awkward for the rest of the journey; how on earth could they deal with this? Steve and Billy didn't know how to counter something as unthinkable as this. Neither of them knew how to approach it, how to talk about it.

And by God, Steve didn't want to.

Much like the first car drive, the brown-haired teen glanced at Billy a few times as he drove, tired eyes observing his expression as discretely as he could.

Billy had curtly knocked his questions, and Steve wasn't going to deny that he was still extremely curious about it, not to mention that Steve was more than glad to think of something else other than what had happened this night.

But why had Billy been in that town in the first place? That alone was extremely peculiar, let alone the fact that Billy had been there at the right place at the right time, when Steve needed someone most of all to help him. Had Billy always visited that town before Steve ever went there? Did he have friends or family there—that certainly seemed unlikely.

Maybe it was quite similar to Steve's reason. Did Billy have fears and monsters of his own to hide from? Did he try and escape from Hawkins, just like Steve had wanted? Even if he had, it all seemed far too convenient...

Convenient. Using the word in such a context, it made Steve cringe.

Steve decided to ease his eyes shut, head panging slightly, he was overthinking it all. Billy was right, he really was in no shape to be processing so much information. He just needed to breathe, to relax, no matter how impossible it seemed to be for him right now.

"Your parents not gonna be pissed with you staying out so late?"

Steve flinched at the sudden disturbance, blinking his eyes open a few times as he looked towards Billy, who offered him a very short-lived apologetic glance.

"Sorry to wake you, sleeping beauty, but we're almost at your place."

Steve held onto his last few moments of resting before he sat up painfully, movements groggy and strained.

"Wasn't sleeping..." He finally replied, voice raspy, as he squinted his eyes to search outside. He recognised this road.

"Well?" Billy reiterated his question, shifting his bright, blue eyes repeatedly between the ill-lit road and Steve.

Wait—how did Billy know where he lived?

"Eh—yeah—no... they're not—they're never... They're not home." Steve sluggishly cleared his throat, mind still a bit jumbled as he tried to force himself to wake up, lest Billy is rendered to carry him inside and up to his room.

Billy's brows knotted together at Steve's words, his face portraying obvious concern. "I'm not gonna lie, Harrington... Little bit uncomfortable with leaving you alone by yourself in the state you're in."

Steve toyed with the sleeves of his jacket at that, eyes torn between

looking at Billy or anywhere else, the brunette always left unresponsive whenever Billy showed him any kind of concern. This was going to be hard to adjust to—assuming it even lasted.

“Well, I don’t... have...” Steve made no effort to expand on that, brown eyes locked on his blotched hands, leg bouncing up and down, clearly squirming in the silence.

Steve felt a foul amount of dread well up in his stomach as his dimmed house came into view down the dark road, his lips drawing into a line. He didn’t want to appear as though it bothered him, he wasn’t going to admit to it, but he did not want to be left alone again.

Especially not now.

Steve didn’t have much time to ponder on it.

“Look... Just—Just so I know you don’t—that you’re alright by tomorrow, maybe I could crash on your couch or something. I don’t wanna invade or anything, but I’m not leaving you by yourself.”

Steve was honestly amused by how sincere yet demanding the statement was. That warm feeling was worming its way back into the pit of his stomach again, and he looked to Billy with a gaze that was far too hopeful.

“What about your parents? Would they not be pissed with you being out so late and then not coming back? I don’t think it’d be a good idea to call them at this hour...”

Steve sensed something sinister as he noted how cold Billy’s expression had suddenly become, how his eyes had seemed to harden like stone. Steve almost regretted saying anything at all, but then Billy softened, practically deflating like a balloon as he finally pulled the car up to Steve’s house, turning the engine off.

“It’s fine. My folks don’t really mind that much.”

And that was that. How clipped the statement was and how the tone it harboured was crisp, Steve knew not to push it any further. He allowed his relief to shine then as he smiled for the very first time

that night, although it was small and frail.

“You don’t need to sleep on the couch, we have a guest room—eh, a few, actually... you can pick whatever one you want.”

Steve’s smile faltered slightly at the unreadable look Billy gave him.

“What? What’s with that look?”

Billy slowly perked a brow at him before shaking his head and turning to face the steering wheel, scoffing before he let off a low chuckle as he pulled his keys from the ignition.

“You’re just a rich son of a bitch, is all.”

Steve wasn’t sure if he should laugh or argue against that—was it even an insult? But he knew Billy didn’t intend anything malicious towards him with those words. Instead, Steve simply huffed and moved to exit the Camaro, using the opened door to pull himself up and out, still severely weakened and hurt.

“--Just being polite.” He responded curtly between a hiss, hunching over slightly as he tried to walk. Billy quickly jumped out of his side of the car and darted around the vehicle to Steve, completely disregarding their little feud as he wrapped his arm around the brunette, his grip finding itself on Steve’s hip.

“Hey, take it easy, will you? Jesus...” Billy scolded, giving Steve the same disapproving look that the nurse did back at the hospital. Steve merely grunted in response, investing his weight onto Billy as they gradually made their way to Steve’s front door.

There it was again. That hot, flaming sensation began to pool inside him once more, and Steve couldn’t properly explain why he kept his head so low as Billy essentially carried him to his house, face searing.

Once they reached the large wooden door, Steve fumbled for his keys, determined to ignore the scorching feeling surrounding his hip, where Billy’s hand seemed to settle around so perfectly.

Steve shoved his house key into the lock, scrabbled, his fingers indenting clumsily into Billy’s leather jacket. The damned thing was

hard to grab onto properly.

Soon enough, however, the door was pushed open and they stepped inside. Billy let off a low, drawn whistle; eyes widening slightly as he traced them over every inch of the house that was revealed to him.

“Damn, Harrington... I mean, I could tell your house was big, but... damn.” The statement was followed by a short, husky laugh - Billy was clearly amused - before he craned his head of curls to stare at the still-fucking-flustered Steve, who shrugged his shoulders weakly in response.

“Just get me to my room, asshole.”

Steve instantly regretted those words, swallowing harshly, as Billy leered down at him in response; a grin shark-like and predatory crept its way upon his face. The blonde’s eyes glinted brightly.

“Eager to get me up there with you, eh, princess?” Billy smirked deviously, but it quickly faded from his face as he noted Steve’s reaction. The brunette tore his gaze away, a look of discomfort settling upon his features as he clung to Billy, sighing.

“Harrington—I didn’t mean—”

“I know-- I know. Damn it— I know...” Steve clenched his teeth, losing himself in his shame once more. He refused to make eye contact with Billy, who tentatively reached his free hand down to Steve, before swiftly retracting it—as though one wrong move would cause the other male to jump out from his skin.

“I know you’re not—That you didn’t-- I’m just—” He shook his head vigorously, frustrated at his inept ability to correctly form basic words.

Billy’s shoulders slumped as he breathed out a tired gust of air.
“Harrington... Steve—”

“Thank you.”

Billy was finally the one left speechless as Steve suddenly spoke, the brunette quickly standing upright and facing Billy so that they were

practically chest to chest, but this was mainly due to how Billy was holding Steve.

Steve didn't give Billy any time to respond as he expanded on what he said.

"Thank you. For tonight. For everything you've done. I... I can't—I don't *want* to imagine what would have happened if you hadn't shown up."

Billy clenched his jaw solidly. Steve's expression was so genuine and honest; so sincere and raw. His large, dark eyes never removed themselves from Billy's as he spoke, glassy, glazed-- they were practically gleaming. This was certainly the best reminder Billy has had as to why he gave Steve the nickname 'Bambi'.

Steve barely noticed Billy's grasp on his hip grow firmer as they just bore their eyes into each other, before finally, Billy offered Steve a slow but earnest nod. The blonde was the first to divert his eyes, much to Steve's surprise.

"I think it's about time you got some sleep."

Steve felt his lips being tugged into his infamous slanted smile.

"I think we both need some damned sleep."

"And a fucking week off while we're at it."

Steve shocked himself with how loudly he laughed.

Notes for the Chapter:

Please let me know what you think!

Hope you enjoyed!

Author's Note:

For anyone who's concerned about my opinion on rape, as I didn't voice it at the beginning, then please refer to Billy kicking the ever-living shit out of the

man in this story.

That. That's my opinion.